

TESTIMONY OF GOVERNOR JON S. CORZINE
UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND
PUBLIC WORKS
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Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the Environmental Protection Agency Administrator's denial of California's waiver to allow states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles, and its significance to New Jersey. This decision is unacceptable and will negatively impact New Jersey's efforts to combat global climate change. Denying the waiver will have a profound effect on the health of New Jersey's citizens and our attempts to protect our natural resources and our economy.

There is no mistaking the threats of global warming and the health hazards caused by ozone air pollution in our densely populated coastal state. However, the Administrator's denial of the waiver, ignores the threats of global warming. In response to the environmental and economic threats of climate change, states like California and New Jersey have worked to reduce their impacts of greenhouse gas emissions. But Administrator Johnson's decision has denied New Jersey and the other states a key resource in our efforts to address climate change.

Recently, I signed an Executive Order that seeks by 2020 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels, or by approximately 20%, and calls for a total 80% reduction below 2006 levels by 2050. The goals in the executive order were then incorporated into the "New Jersey Global Warming Response Act", which was signed into law in July, 2007. These policies and goals are among the most aggressive climate control programs in the country.

However, these goals can not be met, unless the State is permitted to implement the California program, to decrease the emissions of motor vehicles. In 2004 the transportation sector accounted for 36% of New Jersey's total carbon dioxide emissions. Improving motor vehicle fuel efficiency and setting greenhouse gas emissions standards represent the greatest opportunity for significant energy savings in the transportation sector.

The California greenhouse gas standards for motor vehicles are a key component in meeting those goals. The California greenhouse gas standards for motor vehicles must move forward so that not only California, but the 13 other states, including New Jersey, that have adopted the standards will be able to move forward in addressing the problem of global warming.

The authority to implement this California Low Emissions Vehicle Program, has been confirmed by numerous court decisions that have upheld challenges to the California emissions standard and clarified the legalities for California to adopt such standards. In fact, in April, the United States Supreme Court ruled that greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles are pollutants that can be regulated under the Clean Air Act. This ruling and the Clean Air Act give states like California and New Jersey the jurisdiction to design a clean car program.

In the Administrator's denial of the waiver, he cited concerns about creating a confusing patchwork of different state emissions standards. However, there are only two standards – the California standard and the federal standard. While these two standards are similar, they serve different purposes. The new energy bill will regulate fuel economy standards, but the California standard focuses primarily on regulating greenhouse gas emissions, which are the cause of global climate change. Instead, the only patchwork created would be the geographic distribution of the two programs.

Administrator Johnson also cites the Energy Bill and its CAFÉ standards as a substitute for California's greenhouse gas standards. However, the two programs are not equivalent. The California Air Resources Board has analyzed the two programs and found the California program will have nearly double the emission reductions relative to the new energy law. The goals of the Energy Bill are to reduce energy consumption which is laudable, but it is not sufficient to protect the environment from the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions.

We should not kid ourselves. The reason we are having this debate today, is because states are looking for ways to combat global climate change. New Jersey's situation is compelling as we will be adversely impacted by climate change. Global warming is the most urgent environmental issue we face. It is having a serious impact on New Jersey's public health, environment and economy in several ways.

First, the effects of global climate change could be devastating to New Jersey's natural resources. New Jersey has 130 miles of highly populated coastline, as well as thousands of acres of coastal salt marshes and tidal flats, coastal wetlands, and tidal freshwater wetlands. These areas are highly vulnerable to the predicted sea level rise from global warming. Rising seas would inundate many acres of New Jersey's remaining coastal salt marshes and tidal flats that provide flood protection, water quality benefits, and habitat for native species. Sea level rise would alter flooding and salinity of the State's coastal wetlands, which are among the largest, most productive, and most diverse in the mid-Atlantic region, with substantial adverse impacts on wildlife and fisheries.

Second, sea level rise could cause chronic flooding within this century, and sections of the State's highly developed coastline could be submerged by this flooding.

Third, higher temperatures and increased frequency of heat waves due to global warming also may increase the number of heat-related deaths and the incidence of heat-related illnesses. Climate change models project a significant increase in the number of days above 90 degrees Fahrenheit in New Jersey, which will increase heat stress, particularly for vulnerable urban populations such as the elderly and urban poor. In addition, an increase in temperature also means an increase in air pollutants in a state already has high air pollution. For example, in the summer of 2002, New Jersey had the highest number of ozone violations per monitoring station in the nation. Ground level ozone concentrations throughout the entire state of New Jersey exceed current national health-based standards. Higher temperatures will tend to increase these health violations.

In summary, the Administrator's decision to prohibit the states' ability to effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles is unacceptable. This decision will have a profoundly adverse effect on New Jersey and must be reversed. This is a non-partisan, state's rights issue, and I call upon the Administrator to fully explain his rationale for his decision.